

I am writing to protest the FCC's decision to allow Sinclair Broadcasting's upcoming airing of what is clearly a partisan op-ed documentary regarding Sen. Kerry. Your decision goes beyond the dangers of media consolidation. It erodes the very foundation of our democracy.

The airwaves belong to the public. Guardianship and regulation of the airwaves involves being able to distinguish between what is news and what is clearly partisan gamesmanship. I understand that Sinclair has offered to interview Sen. Kerry after the airing in the pretense of "fairness", but Sinclair's decision to allow the piece to be aired in the first place obviously casts doubt on their ability to conduct a fair after-the-smear interview. If Sinclair is allowed to proceed, the only way to re-establish any semblance of balance would be to let the Kerry campaign air a piece of its own choosing. But even then, the line that the FCC is supposed to protect would have been crossed, and the horrific precedent of allowing op-ed partisanship to be aired as "news" would be doubly set. Surely we all recall our mothers telling us that two wrongs don't make a right!?

Regardless of anybody's opinion of Mr. Moore's recent op-ed documentary, Fahrenheit 911, he must be given credit for calling it an op-ed piece and showing it in movie theaters. The producers of Sinclair's upcoming broadcast should be required to do the same, or at least be required to let the Kerry folks choose what may aired (equal time, same stations, same time slots) in response.

If the FCC is unable to distinguish between what is clearly partisan politics, whether from the left or right, from actual news, it should notify Congress immediately that the country is in dire need of a protector of the public's airwaves. Only those with strength enough to set their own partisan views aside in order to preserve the public's right to open and fair access to our own media need apply. Our democracy, as well as our requisite faith in its institutions, depend on it. Please step back, take another look, resist the urge to spin justifications in this overheated political environment for what Sinclair plans to do, and make what is clearly the right choice to preserve our democracy here at home as we try to promote it with a straight face abroad. Either deny Sinclair, or protect Kerry's right to respond in a manner of his own choosing.

Thank you,

Robert Satchwell
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